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ABSTRACT

American public education is in trouble but educators have no long-term plan of action, are not thinking comprehensively, and are ignoring lessons of the past. A review of events since Sputnik (1957) reveals several lessons. From 1957 to 1963 national curriculum programs and isolated school experiments were introduced but did not take hold. In the 1963-73 period, the chase for federal categorical grants led to fragmentation and the loss of curriculum supervisors. From 1973 to 1978 retrenchment and new management methods caused loss of curriculum specialists and further curriculum drift. Most recently (1978-82), continuing retrenchment and political and financial crises have produced a dull and valueless curriculum and no curriculum leadership. Leaders now are concentrating on short-term, not long-term, solutions. Curriculum leaders, moreover, have forgotten the central role of democratic values in the schools' purpose, forgotten how to lead, and forgotten curriculum methodology. Three steps need to be taken. First, schools' purposes--what they are for and whom they serve--must be clarified. Second, educators must make long-term commitments to change and to planning for program implementation. Finally, school organization must be decentralized and curriculum developers returned to the building level. (Author/RW)

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COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL PLANNING: BRINGING ORDER TO SCHOOL CHANGE IN THE 1980'S

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I. American Education In Trouble

American education is in trouble. Most of us can agree on that. What we can't seem to do is to look beyond immediate problems to long-range solutions. We also can't seem to profit from past experiences. In short, we have become reactive, whining educators who seem content to let those outside the profession determine the destiny of American public education.

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EA 015 293

The 1980's are unprecedented times for American schools. Schools are being forced to operate on reduced budgets, legislative bodies and the courts are mandating curriculum changes, pressure groups are mounting attacks on school leaders and school programs, curricular programs and materials are in disarray, and parents are expecting more from schools for less tax dollars.

Decisions made today may well determine whether schools and school systems as we know them will remain or become historical relics. If we as educators continue to deal with the problems outlined above in piecemeal fashion, if we continue to simply react, if we have no plan of action, if we cannot think comprehensively, if we ignore valuable lessons of the past, if we stand for nothing, then we will have no part in determining the destiny of American education.

How did we arrive at the present state of public school education? How can we bring order to school change? How can we control our destiny? These are the questions that the authors believe we must deal with if we are to be educational leaders.

II. 1957-1982 - Lessons Learned

It was twenty-five years that the launching of Sputnik started us on a quarter century of reacting rather than leading in American education. What were the events that caused a reactive than than

proactive stance on the part of educators? What lessons have we learned in the past twenty-five years that can help us bring order to school change in the 80's? Let's examine these events and the lessons learned:

Dates:	Events	Lessons Learned
1957-1963	National Curriculum Projects in science, mathematics, and foreign languages - Funded by the federal government, developed by leading scholars, field-tested by leading practitioners.	Lasting curriculum change will not occur as a result of National Curriculum Projects - Less than one-third of American schools ever adopted the nationally developed programs - By the 1980's, most of the programs have disappeared from American schools.
	Isolated innovations.	Few of the innovations of the 1960's such as nongraded schools, open classrooms exist in American schools in the 80's.
1963-1973	Federal and state legislative acts create many programs for special needs students, the disadvantaged, and those seeking employment opportunities.	Growing fragmentation of curriculum -
		Piecemeal approach to curriculum development - led to lack of continuity, alienation of teachers and parents who questioned the value of such programs.
	Many new programs and materials developed by publishers and other private groups to meet growing demands for cultural pluralism, affective needs of students, and programs for students with special needs.	Chasing of categorical funds led to new programs unrelated to rest of curriculum and to creation of many new jobs that ended when federal dollars dried up -
		Curriculum specialists and subject area supervisors became directors of federal projects - No one was left to oversee the total curriculum.

1973-1978	Retrenchment, declining enrollment; management practices applied to schools; further decline in number of curriculum specialists and subject area supervisors in school districts; de-centralized administrative organizational patterns in school districts.	With no leadership of curriculum specialists and supervisors, and de-centralization of administration in school districts, further drift in curriculum occurred - Gaps and overlaps in curriculum in all subject areas became commonplace.
1978-1982	Further retrenchment, accountability legislation and competency testing programs begin to dictate curriculum - Serious problems in financing schools - further decline in enrollment - computer technology advancing at phenomenal rate - Increased attacks on education by the right and by religious groups - Rapid turnover of administrators and school boards - drift and chaos in many school districts. Lack of national leaders in education.- No philosophic spokesmen - Lack of common core of values.	Valueless curriculum and lack of balance in curriculum result when educators let minimal skills testing programs dictate the total instructional program- Dull, mindless curriculum has become accepted mode in American schools - Schools become pawns of various special interest groups when no common core of values exists and no leaders are available to articulate the timeless democratic ideals of American schools.

The events of the past twenty-five years have indeed provided us with some lessons learned, yet have we learned? Where are we in 1982? Where are we in ASCD? Frankly, the authors are appalled and

disturbed when we see those in leadership positions today trading short-term gain for long-range leadership. What are those persons in leadership positions doing? They are traveling the country with "sideshow" presentations on such topics as leadership styles, assertive discipline, brain growth, and management techniques.

And what of inservice needs of teachers and principals? At a time when fragmentation and imbalances of curriculum exist, when gaps and overlaps exist in all subject areas, where there is a great need for curriculum development and articulation, what sort of inservice do we provide teachers and principals?-----Increasingly, we have provided teachers and administrators with motivational, "hype-type" speakers who, during one-night stands, entertain them with such antics as multiple slide presentation shows, trumpet solos, lots of jokes, and stories about their childhood.

Where are the educational leaders who will help teachers and administrators develop comprehensive curriculum plans that will transcend politics? Where are our leaders who will make long-range committments to school districts to help them overcome their problems?

Finally, what have we learned in ASCD? Do we in our action, publications, and conferences continue to be reactive rather than proactive? Do we support continued fragmentation of curriculum by focusing on narrow topics, and the "gig" of the day, or do we focus on building a strong base for American education? Do we heed the

call of entrepreneurs or listen to the timeless advice of past leaders such as Hollis Caswell, Alice Miel, and Kimball Wiles who said that in our democratic society schools belong to all of the children of all of the people? And what of our national conferences? Should we meet to listen and react or meet to plan and act? What is the focus of our organization? What do we stand for? Representing a cross-section of educational leadership in America, when are we going to harness that talent into providing new purpose, new meaning, new leadership for American education?

III. What Have We Forgotten?

The overview that you have just read possesses a familiar ring for all of us concerned with the development of curriculum. The chronology of events has us attempting to redesign/restructure the curriculum from 1958-63, chasing categorical dollars for the next ten years, sliding to the brink of a very unfortunate position in the years 1973-78, and confronting crisis from 1978 to the present. To be candid, the twenty-five years since Sputnik was launched have been a disaster for logical and comprehensive school planning!

We presently find ourselves in schools blown off course and out-of-position. Teachers in the elementary school describe their curriculum in terms of the names of publishing companies (we teach Laidlaw, Holt, Economy, etc.). High school teachers speak of a range of offerings from seven advanced courses in English literature to minimal DCT programs. Middle school teachers, despite fifteen years of curriculum renewal efforts, still don't possess a clear conception of their purpose.

At the district level we find most of those persons who might have served as curriculum specialists or supervisors in the 1950's holding down titles that correspond to some federal program which soon will no longer exist. The deployment of these persons in the 1960's and 1970's created a leadership vacuum at the building level that hasn't been filled by either

teacher unions or administrative personnel. Most attention in district offices is on RIF notices being posted.

Finally, under the influence of this cruel and punishing recession, schools everywhere are rapidly rolling back the programs of instruction under such simplistic banners as performance objectives and competency testing. Our efforts in many places in 1982 might be accurately described as disorganized, directionless, and depressing. Two questions seem important for us to study: What have we forgotten during this twenty-five year rollercoaster ride and what can we do about our current position?

There is a word which is sadly neglected today that underpinned most of our educational efforts until the 1950's--that word is democracy. It is a word that was used frequently by Dewey, Bode, Kilpatrick and Rugg. In its context, these leaders spoke of democracy not as a system of government in which supreme power is vested in the people...although they understood these things...but rather as a way of life where no single group could dominate others on the basis of class distinction, heredity, or privilege. These educators, whom we cherish, and quote so often, perceived a danger in our way of life which pitted social equality against economic competition. If capitalism and competition became dominant they reasoned, basic human rights might be trampled. Schools, according to Dewey,

"were the institution best organized to serve Democracy's cause."

The point we are making is that we have lost sight of a very important value in recent times.....Democracy. Education, throughout this century has been the key response to repressive social relations. As Bowles and Gintis have observed:

> "The educational system, perhaps more than any other contemporary social institution, has become the laboratory in which competing solutions to the problems of personal liberation and social equality are tested and the arena in which social struggles are fought out."

In short, Democracy is the historic value or social ideal which has given direction to our educational aims. If education in public schools is our primary instrument to shape our destiny as a society then shouldn't our curriculum be planned with essentials first and refinements second? We don't believe that Holt, Laidlaw or Economy have the corner on conventional wisdom, nor can we see assertive discipline as the primary instructional training need of our teachers. Isn't it time that we refocused on what is truly essential? The meaning of education is not synonymous with the means of education.

A second thing that we seem to have forgotten is how to lead. Management is not leadership. If you study the extensive literature on this topic you will find that to be a leader three things must occur. First, it is necessary that one possess certain skills or characteristics for leading. Second, in

leading, it is necessary that one find himself or herself in a situation where your skills are useful. Finally, and this is a recent revelation, it is necessary that one be perceived as a leader by those one wishes to lead.

Recently, we have been carrying on a study of curriculum leaders ranging from those historic figures as Dewey and Counts to new and emerging leaders who will dominate the remainder of this century. It is amazing how similiar those leaders' methods of influence are when put to analysis. Whether we are talking about Counts and Rugg or Bruner and Kohlberg, we find persons who have studied timely topics, associated with others who found their work useful, and skillfully utilized a medium (usually the written word) to repeat their message until recognized. There is nothing unusual about most of these men and women...they grew up in small towns and cities in Kansas and Pennsylvania. Many of them aren't even educators by training...but they all are very skillful and influential leaders. We would dare say that anyone in this room could achieve a parallel degree of recognition if they followed a parallel pattern of development. We need more forceful leaders in curriculum, and we believe we are spending entirely too much time on the sidelines in the 1980's. (Parenthetically, one has to wonder where ASCD is as an organization as it advertises its theme, educational leadership?)

The third thing that appears to have been forgotten is a century of curriculum methodology. The cycles of development suggested by Ruggs and Tyler and Taba aren't being used much today. Rather, we seem stuck on evaluation - letting analysis, design and implementation of curriculum and instruction follow the ends. Certainly, such a technique leads to an ever-smaller circle of reasoning.

IV. What Can We Do?

More important than what we have forgotten is the question, what can we do? All of the conditions described in this paper are out there in everyone's district and it is tough to know where to begin. A prescription of meaning...not simply rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic...seems to be made up of three parts: First, clarify our purpose. Second, make a long-term commitment to change that transcends politics. Third, immediately begin to decentralize our organizations.

By clarifying our purpose, we are not talking about writing objectives or generating more lists of worthy goals. We are talking about answering two simple questions: What is school for and who will be served? In all of the specialization of the past twenty-five years we seem to have forgotten the core purpose of schools...to prepare future citizens. That goal is the end. Testings and competencies are the means. To continue

to chase the superficial ends will surely lead to an energetic malnourishment.

We need to focus on strategic decision-making rather than tactical decision-making in organizing our schools....get to the essentials first, refinement second. Those who wish to turn a public school into an industrial training site, sell education, or reduce learning to measurable test scores should be challenged and illuminated for what they are. (Perhaps even watered regularly.) Public schools are supported by public taxes and that takes in most of us. Historically, public schools have included balanced programs for a wide range of learners. <u>They should remain that way and it is our job/role to see that they do.</u>

Second, there should be a commitment to long-range planning for the implementation of programs. During the past several years, these writers have committed ourselves to working only in districts that approach the design and implementation of school programs seriously and with a realistic time-frame. Districts like St. Louis Public Schools, Denver Public Schools, and Upper Darby, Pennsylvania Public Schools, to name some of the places we've worked extensively in the past year, are meeting the problems we've spoken of with hard work and coordinated planning. If a school board changes, if a superintendent leaves, if a bond issue fails, the plan for improvement goes on.

Under such commitments, curriculum development is like a distance-rate-time problem. Money is the only real variable!

As a side note to need for long-range efforts, we believe it is vital that educators begin to discriminate between real planning and the so-called "Amway hype" that is regularly circulated about the country as "model programs." Yes, we should be suspicious of any school district making outlandish claims of growth in short periods of time by manipulation of several variables. Schools are simply more complex than that! <u>There is no quick fix in developing quality programs!</u>

Finally, it appears that a general prescription for improving schools in the 1980's is to decentralize our efforts. Returning all of those personnel who in the 1950's were at the building level---to the building level---will pay dividends. A school with a curriculum person, a school with subject supervisors, a school with assistant principals who know a specific function will be a more effective and productive school. A broad spectrum of research supports this position. It seems clear, after twenty-five years, that administrators and teachers will not and cannot fill the curriculum development void.

It is our hope that the statements in this paper have stunned you a little. We all seem to be experiencing a form of stage fright in getting on about the business of improving schools in the 1980's. But as Lyndon Johnson told us nearly twenty years ago, "The answer to all our national problems comes down to a single word--education." Lets never forget how important the work of those persons in curriculum is to our nation.